THE VISIONS OF Sir Heiſter Ryley: WITH OTHER ENTERTAINMENTS.

Wednesday Auguſt 30. 1710.

From my Houſe in St. James's Square, Auguſt 27.

HAVING ſome important Affairs depending at Court, the leiſure Hours I had in waiting to get my Petition ſign'd I ſpent (according to my old Cuſtom) in enquiring, Whether any of my Acquaintance at that end of the Town had lately advanced themſelves by their ſingular Merits. I was told that ſeveral were preferred to Poſts of Honour. Upon this Advice, I made formal Viſits to two or three of them. The Reſpect they received me with, baniſhed from me all Envy. I could not repine at their good Fortune, though Fate had lately been ſo croſs as to ruine me. This I counted not as a Vertue: For there are ſcarce any to be found among the giddy Multitude, who are ſo rude in their Nature, as either to be angry or uneaſie when they ſee Men ſit in the Chair of Authority, who entertain all Gueſts with Humility, and the Air of Gentlemen. By this thought I was thrown into an Amuſement, and went to St. *James's Coffee-Houſe*, where I retir'd to the farther end of the Room, and ſate down in a Corner to ſleep. I dream'd I was carried into a ſtrange Land, inhabited by a wealthy and ſubtle People. As I was ſtanding on a Mountain to take a View of the Cities Towns and Palaces in that Flouriſhing and Populous Kingdom, there appear'd towards the Weſt an extraordinary Darkneſs. By its ſpreading it ſelf I thought at firſt it might preſage ſome violent Tempeſt; but looking more ſtedfaſtly as it came towards me, I beheld the Figure of a Man incircled with Inſcriptions, which denoted that he was, *The Image*

of

of Oppreſſion. His Countenance was unſpeakably deform'd and terrible; he held in his Left Hand a Blazing Torch; as he moved it, Flames of Fire ſeemed to fly about him, clouded with Smoak. In the mean time a Trumpet ſounded, and a Multitude came from all Parts in great Bodies, and bowed down and worſhipped this Monſter. As ſoon as the Aſſembly was gathered together round the Hills where the Image ſate on a Throne, a Voice was heard as if it came out of the great Depths, commanding all Mortals then preſent to give Attention to the Decrees of this powerful Prince. Then the Tyrant caus'd Proclamation to be made, That all Title and Claim to Juſtice, Equity and Right ſhould be laid aſide as trifling Toys, by all Perſons in Authority and Power. After this, I ſaw ſeveral Courts erected in the Neighbouring Valleys, and Judges ſeated on the Benches. Immediately great Numbers of People flock'd to theſe Aſſizes, Juries were impannell'd, Witneſſes call'd, and Cauſes try'd; which latter took up much time to hear, but that I obſerved was only done to amuſe the Ignorant: For tho' many Widows, Orphans and indigent Perſons proved a real Title to their Places and Eſtates, and had Learned Council to plead for them, yet the Verdicts were given in favour of the Rich and Mighty: And to confirm theſe illegal Decrees, I ſaw the Image holding up his flaming Torch againſt the Writings that were produced in the ſeveral Courts, and there ſtreamed forth ſuch a ſulphureous Smoke as ſo defaced the fair Characters of all Bonds, Leaſes, and other Inſtruments of the injured Parties, that one could ſcarce read three Lines together without loſing the Senſe of the Matter; ſo that all theſe Writings were look'd upon as cancell'd, and others were drawn up by Publick Notaries; which new Indentures transferr'd the Places and Inheritances to Strangers, who by Perjury and Bribery had gained the Cauſes. This I ſaw occaſioned a wonderful Revolution among the People; for many Families who liv'd in fine Apartments, and in great Plenty, were obliged to remove to little Cottages and Chambers, to feed upon courſe Fare. What mov'd my Compaſſion moſt was to ſee an Old Gentleman, who had laid many curious Schemes, very advantageous to the Publick, driven out of his Houſe and ſent a Begging. I ask'd the Reaſon of this violent Act; it was anſwered, the *Prince of Oppreſſion* had done it, and there was no reverſing the Sentence. The next Proclamation made by the Image, was, That a certain number of People then called over by their Names, ſhould divide themſelves into four ſeparate Bodies, and ſtand ſeverally in the four Quarters of the World. The Company that ſtood on the Eaſt-ſide were all Young Women dreſt in mean Apparel, but in the Attire of Harlots. They who appeared on the Weſt, were Ladies adorn'd with fine Garments and Jewels; but all of them either old or deform'd. The Company on the North-ſide were

Beau-

Beautiful Virgins in the Flower of Youth, who appeared with an Air of Modeſty. They on the South-ſide, were Men of different Ages, with laſcivious Countenances and a wanton Meen. So ſoon as theſe four Bodies were thus rang'd in Order, the *Prince of Oppreſſion* ſet forth his Decree, which I thought was not only ſtrange, but a little unreaſonable: For he commanded that the Women on the Eaſt ſide ſhould have delivered to each of them a Written Scroll of Parchment, impowering thoſe Miſtreſſes of Pleaſure to go and change their mean Dreſſes with the old and deform'd Ladies, for their Rich Apparel and Jewels. This Decree, I obſerved, was well enough approved of by the Husbands of the Vertuous Women: For they took the Harlots in their Wives Attire, and entertain'd them with great Joy as their Concubines. The next Edict was, that the Men on the South ſide ſhould go over to the Train of Virgins, and either by Careſſes, Bribes, or Violence deprive them of their Virginity. The executing of this Decree, I thought, preſented me with a ſtrange kind of Scene: For the Male Kind ran as Arrows out of Bows to raviſh the Innocent. The Old Fellows of Threeſcore were as nimble in their Race, upon this occaſion, as many of the Young Men of Twenty. Indeed the doting Fools of Eighty made not that haſte, but took more time to come up, and when they arrived at the Beautiful Goal, they were ſo enfeebled by their March, that they wanted Ability to embrace the Treaſures they came to enjoy. After this, I ſaw the whole Aſſembly was adjourn'd, and the *Image of Oppreſſion* retir'd into his Chamber of Darkneſs, from whence he at firſt appear'd. Here I ask'd one that ſtood by me all the while, who ſeem'd to abhor the unjuſt Decrees of this Tyrant, How long theſe irregular Proceedings had been practiſed in this Country? He told me, ever ſince he could remember. What (ſays I) with ſo much Rigour and Partiality as now? No (ſays he) when I was a Youth, one of theſe General Aſſizes was held but once a Year, now they are call'd every Month. Are all the People of this Land (ſaid I) of this Aſſembly? Are there none among the Multitude that do Right? Here the Man look'd upon me and ſmil'd. Friend (ſays he) I find by the Queſtions you ask me, you are a Stranger in theſe Parts. I'll be plain with you, the moſt of my Countrymen were at this Aſſembly, and approved of thoſe Proceedings. However, there is a little Company abſent, who have Courts and Laws of their own among themſelves. There the *Image of Juſtice* appears in an extraordinary Light, and publiſhes her Decrees, that all Titles and Claims ſhall ſtill continue in the Poſſeſſion of the true and lawful Owners. I ſaw that Princeſs (ſaid he) at our Petty Seſſions diſperſe with her Royal Scepter, Fraud, Extortion, Bribery, and Corruption. Starting up (as I thought) to ask him on what Plain the *Image of Juſtice* kept her Four Terms, and the Names of the Twelve

Judges

Judges and Four Barons that gave Sentence under her Authority, I ſuddenly awaked out of my Sleep, and finding my ſelf at St. *James's Coffee-houſe*, look'd about me. Lord (ſaid I) am I here with honeſt Gentlemen, I thought I had been a great way off, penn'd in among a Crowd of Knaves, going off loaded with the Spoils of the Innocent.

St. James's Square, Auguſt 28.

I received this Epiſtle laſt Night.

SIR,

'THIS is the firſt Opportunity I had of doing my ſelf the Honour of Writing to you, under whoſe Cuſtody are the Originals of Ancient and Modern Manuſcripts and Pictures; and being aſſured by Report of undoubted Truth, that a Piece newly drawn from the Life by a curious Hand, is brought to you, and now hangs up in your Middle Hall on the Eaſt-ſide: Be pleaſed to honour me with a Copy of it, and I ſhall not fail, upon all Occaſions, to ſhew how much I cheriſh the Title I pretend to with ſo much Juſtice of being,

SIR, *&c.*

I returned the following Anſwer.

SIR,

'I Have by me the Picture you mention, and (according to your Requeſt) do herewith ſend you a Draught of the Original, which falls very ſhort of giving you the Satisfaction you might have had in viewing the Piece it ſelf.

Heiſter Ryley.

A Copy of the Character taken from the Original Picture, juſt as it hangs up in my Great Hall.

This Piece repreſents a Perſon, whoſe Ambition carried him far above his Sphere, and led him to an eager Purſuit of Honour and Preferment. One Place of Truſt could not ſatisfie him; he was not contented with being the Favourite of the Prince under whoſe Authority he bore Rule. He took a ſingular Pleaſure in performing Actions that might regiſter his Name to after Ages, and proclaim him Great. He came into the World Poor, but was fond of dying Rich. If you want to know where he drew his firſt Breath, it was in a Cottage; yet he aim'd to live in a Palace. This Man was for receiving ſingular Favours, but returning Contempt. If at any time rever'd by the Mean and the Baſe, he received the Compliment with an Air of vain Grandeur. View him at Court, in his Houſe, in his Company, or in his private Retirements, he ever repreſents the Original.